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Book ideas for holiday gifts

by **Dave Wood**
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Ned Waldman made history years back when his small publishing company, Waldman House, decided to make a big push for Tom Hegg's "A Cup of Christmas Tea," a very classy looking book, which since then has sold in the millions. Waldman closed down his Minneapolis publishing house last year.

But his son Brett is still in the publishing picture with his new Tristan Press. The young Waldman follows in his father's footsteps by publishing "The Station: A Reminder to Cherish the Journey," by Robert Hastings, illustrations by Melanie Brown (Tristan Publishing, 2300 Louisiana N., Suite B, Golden Valley, MN 55427, \$16.95).

Of all this year's books designed for Christmas giving, "Station" is by a long shot the prettiest. Brett Waldman has pulled out the stops, spending lots of money on a padded copper colored cover, beautiful illustrations, some of them semi-transparent. And then he's priced it at an incredibly low \$16.95 hoping it will catch on as Hegg's "Cup of Christmas Tea" did more than a decade ago.

Hasting's message, written in spare free verse is simple. Arriving at the "station" is not as important as the trip getting there. Thus we should seize each day and live it as if it were our last, lest we count too heavily on the efficacy of our destination.

On a more complex level, Jean Marie Laska's sequel to "Fifty Acres and a Poodle" sends readers an equally important message about family. Her old and her new book, "The Exact

Same Moon" (Bantam, \$23.95), remind me somewhat of "The Egg and I," the story of urbanites moving to the country to start a chicken farm back in the 1940s.

In Laska's story, she and her psychologist husband move to a hobby farm, where everything is seemingly perfect. But then her mother takes sick in Philadelphia and the author must return to nurse her, after which she returns to the farm, where she attempts to adjust to her new lifestyle and to her realization that she and her partner need a family. The resolution is tender, heartwarming and a fine idea for a Christmas gift.

I should say from the get-go that I am an acquaintance of the next author under consideration, but I'm not going to disqualify myself from writing about her new book because it's such an obvious choice for any foodie on your holiday gift list.

Anne Burckhardt worked for many years as a food writer and editor of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. In fact, we both worked in the same room.

Anne's a responsible expert, whose neither too fancy, nor too utilitarian. In the newspaper world, food writers range from those who write only about hamburger and noodle hotdish and

those who write only about duck confit swathed in bittersweet chocolate. Burckhardt knows about both types of food and all those in the middle.

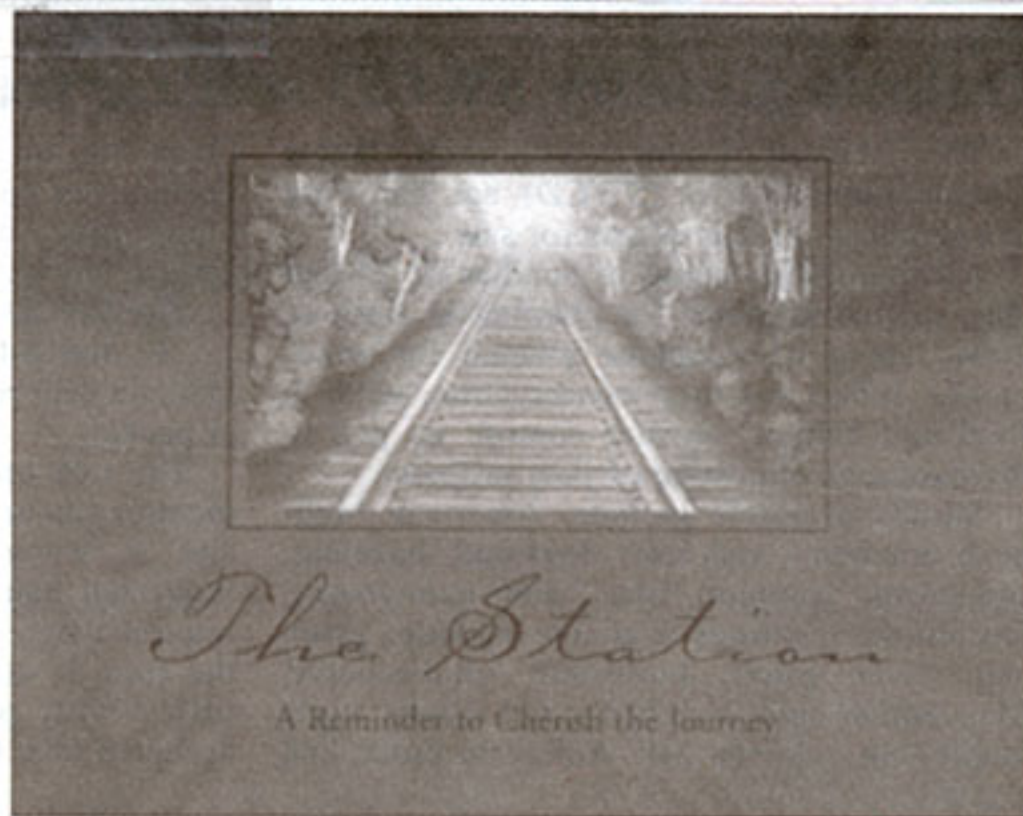
Thus it was with great anticipation that I grabbed her new book, "A Cook's Tour of Minnesota" (Minnesota Historical Society Press, \$19.95 paper).

I was not disappointed.

It should be emphasized this is not strictly a recipe book. In it, Burckhardt does what she has always done best. She writes about the folks who do the cooking, then includes some of the recipes, in this case well chosen.

So, she goes to New Ulm for its famous Heritagefest, describes what goes on there. Then she includes several recipes she picked up while visiting, including a good one for spaetzle, the German noodle, and another for sauerkraut with apples and potatoes.

And then she's off to another Minnesota venue - possibly Cinco de Mayo in St. Paul or maybe to John Schumacher's hotel and restaurant in New Prague. She also writes of some of the more prominent food personalities in the state, like her former colleague, the hilariously informational Al Sicherman of



"The Station: A Reminder to Cherish the Journey"

the Star Tribune.

So that's about it for my two-week tip on giving books for gifts during the holidays. Next week we'll be back to history, biography and fiction.

Dave Wood has just published a

book that contains stories, traditions and recipes gleaned from his family's century and a half in the Midwest. You can obtain a copy by sending a check for \$10 made out to "Dave Wood's Christmas Book," 503 E. Walnut St., River Falls, WI 54022.